

Seabird bycatch and the management objectives process: briefing note by BirdLife International and ACAP.  
25 November 2013

All five tuna RFMOs have now established seabird bycatch conservation and management measures in most areas overlapping with albatross and petrel populations, and are moving to discussing how to monitor the effectiveness of these measures both in terms of compliance and effectiveness of the measures in reducing bycatch.

An ACAP intersessional working group considered this and produced a paper on the preliminary identification of minimum elements to review the effectiveness of seabird bycatch mitigation regulations in tuna RFMOs (see attached). The work of the MOWII overlaps with this process in terms of seeking to establish ecosystem/bycatch indicators for non-target species.

In relation to the objective to minimize bycatch it is important that we have a clear understanding of both the numbers of seabirds of each species that are killed and the nature of interactions (which can inform improved mitigation options). If we are to assess how fisheries mortalities impact on populations – many of which are threatened and highly migratory, comparable information from across RFMOs and domestic fisheries is required. It is recognised that the nature and availability of data currently limits our ability to monitor bycatch rates and impacts, however the establishment of clear objectives and performance measures as part of the MOW process will aid our progress in this direction.

To assist with the development of seabird bycatch objectives we could seek support from the ACAP intersessional working group to consider expanding its terms of reference to specifically consider management objectives, performance measures and target reference points which can then be incorporated into MOW processes. We need to seek expert advice and undertake a wider discussion amongst seabird experts such as at ACAP to be able to provide appropriate advice to RFMOs such as WCPFC who are going through processes such as this MOW. The likely establishment of a CCSBT small technical working group may also assist with this.

Recommendations:

1. That the MOWII support the need to develop appropriate management objectives, performance measures and target reference points for bycatch species including seabirds.
2. That MOWII seek advice through ACAP and BirdLife International and the ACAP intersessional working group and wider expert seabird community to develop appropriate objectives, performance measures and target reference points for seabird bycatch.
3. That ecosystem/ bycatch indicators for non-target species be an agenda item for MOWIII.